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ABSTRACT

This study has attempted to assess the social environments at 2 suburban high schools, to highlight differences between the schools and to link these differences to varying patterns of student socialization. The premise here is that the social settings which an individual confronts on a day-to-day basis serve as an important determinant of the patterns of his psychological growth and development, adaptation or maladaptation. Results include: (1) a greater amount of interaction and in more settings between students and school adults at one school; (2) no difference in the amount of interaction between students and other students at the 2 schools; (3) students at the same one school perceived more personal interest from school adults than did students at the other school; (4) this school encouraged more active student involvement; norms were perceived as being clearer and consequences for norm violation as harsher, here; (5) students, here, indicated a greater preference for work-related activities; and (6) students at the other school indicated a greater preference for the company of their peers than students at the one school. (TA)

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Persons and Settings: A Comparative Analysis of the Quality and Range of Social Interaction in Two Suburban High Schools[1]

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Purpose

Current concepts and research in the behavioral sciences affirm that the social settings which an individual confronts on a day-to-day basis serve as an important determinant of the patterns of his psychological growth and development, adaptation or maladaptation (Brim, 1966, 1968; Parsons and Bales, 1955; Orth, 1963; Mechanic, 1962; Bachman et al., 1967, 1968). This notion is basically ecological in nature because it specifies that these are important relationships (which presumably may be systematically studied) between an individual and his social environment. The developmental period of adolescence and the social institution of the high school comprise a constituted social system where an ecological analysis is appropriately employed. The period of life when an individual is readied for adulthood and the social institution charged with the task of preparing individuals for their future roles in society are thought to constitute an ecological system. This premise underlies the major study. Each of the studies being presented today attempts to assess some aspect of this

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ecological system.

The study reported in this paper has attempted to assess the social environments at two suburban high schools. This work has attempted to highlight differences between these schools and to link these differences to varying patterns of student socialization. Pilot studies concerned with the school environments have provided some empirically derived differences between the study schools. Stillman (1969) suggests that two of the schools differ in the nature of role relationships between students and teachers and in the way behavioral settings at the two schools are utilized. Fatke (1971) suggests that these same schools differ in the quantity of interaction between students, particularly new students, and faculty. Todd (1971) indicates that the development of the student social structure at one school may be strongly influenced by the general environmental structure of the school. Drawing from the implications of these pilot studies and from the author's own observations of the two schools over a period of several years, the current study focused upon comparisons between: a) the quantity of interaction between students and school adults and between students and other students, b) the quality of interaction between students and school adults, c) the effectiveness of socialization, and d) the functions of a variety of social settings. The theoretical framework with which the study has been conducted is presented in Table 1. The general hypothesis of the study states that the student socialization produced by a school setting is a function of both the quantity and quality of interaction that occurs between students and faculty, school administrative staff, other school adults and students. The socialization network of the school is

determined by the breadth of settings across which interaction occurs and by the functions that particular settings serve, defined, at least partially, by the kind(s) of interaction which occur there. The norms for behavior are hypothesized to be determinants of the contents of the socialization process. The clarity with which these expectations are communicated and the techniques employed for dealing with norm violation provide important information about how the socialization process evolves within a school setting.

Method

The Environmental Assessment Inventory

The conceptualization of the similarities and differences between the social structures of the two study schools required an instrument which would simultaneously accomplish many goals. First, it was important to provide a relatively broad descriptive map of the environmental life space of the subjects in the sample. The end goal of the instrument was not to provide information about individual students and faculty but rather how these individuals' collective views of their environment were organized into patterns of behavior at the respective environments. A decision was made to organize the instrument around various global settings which, theoretically, would be relevant places for adolescents to spend time. Special emphasis, of course, was given to the school setting and to its organized functioning. At this point, a decision was made to ask the subjects, as much as possible, within the constraints imposed by the instrument to report about their behavior in these global settings. The author concluded that the collective report of social interactions by students would be a more accurate

reflection of the organization of the social environments under study than the collective perceptions of students about various characteristics of the environments. Thus, the first task the instrument was designed to serve was to provide a broad descriptive map of the social environments (defined as global behavior settings) in terms of reports of social interactions engaged in within these settings.

The second requirement for the instrument was that it allow for a microscopic investigation of the two study schools which would allow hypotheses about differences between the schools to be tested. Hypotheses concerning differences in quantity and quality of interaction, the environmental selection variables, the normative structure, the functions of social settings and the degree of socialization to be expected in each school had been made. The instrument was required to test these hypotheses. A final function was that the instrument would provide data about unique characteristics of the social structure at each school.

A self-report inventory, called the Environmental Assessment Questionnaire (EAQ), is the final instrument. This instrument is designed to provide comparable data at the two schools. Parallel instruments were developed for students and school adults. Students and school adults were asked to report: (1) specific interactions with members of different role groups in a wide range of behavioral settings; (2) perceptions of the quality of interaction between students and school adults; and (3) perceptions of the normative structure of the school. The data about quantity of interaction is based upon subjects'

recollections of a particular kind of behavior during the previous day or previous week. It is important to point out that these data are reports of the respondent's behavior. It is hoped that this type of data will serve in the place of actual observation when a large-scale, systematic overview of a functioning social environment is required.

Sample

Description of the Final Sample

Student Sample

The major requirement of the sample at each school is that it be representative of the student population at that school. In order to insure a representative sample of students from each school, a large, randomly selected sample, stratified by sex and grade level is used. Cluster sampling was employed. The final representative sample includes 17 percent of the students at each school (N=334 at Wayne and N=363 at Thurston).

School Adult Sample

An attempt was made to sample 100 percent of all school adults at the two schools. This included administrators and counselors as well as teachers. It was felt that this type of assessment was required in order to provide an accurate reflection of the school social environment from the perspective of the school adults. The final sample includes 89 adults at each school (total N=178). This represents a response of 75 percent at each school.

Results

The Student Questionnaire

The results of the student questionnaire indicated differences in the quantity of interaction between students and school adults at the two schools -- a greater quantity of interaction was observed at Wayne. Table 2 presents the results of these analyses. No differences were found in the quantity of interaction between students and other students at the two schools. In addition it was found that interaction between students and school adults took place in more settings at Wayne. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3. As an example of this data, the mean number of settings where interaction is reported between students and school adults is 6.07 at Wayne and 4.62 at Thurston.

An analysis was also performed which indicated specific settings at the schools which differed in terms of quantity of interaction. The cafeteria, for example, is a setting at Wayne where large numbers of students report interaction with school adults as well as with other students. At Thurston, on the other hand, very few students report interactions with school adults. It is the contention of the author that these settings are likely to serve quite different functions for student socialization at the two schools. Other settings where the two schools differ always with more interaction reported with school adults at Wayne include the school office, the counselor's office, the study halls, the auditorium, the athletic field and the restroom.

Quality of interaction was found to differ in the following way: students at Wayne perceived more personal interest from school adults

than students at Thurston.

Wayne was found to encourage more active student involvement. Norms were perceived as being clearer and consequences for norm violation harsher at Wayne than at Thurston. Students at Wayne demonstrated a greater preference for the company of adults and a greater perception of socially-oriented norms at their school. These findings confirmed hypotheses that had been made about socialization differences between the schools. In addition students at Wayne indicated a greater preference for work related-activities. This finding was significant but in the opposite direction from the prediction. It was found that students at Thurston displayed a greater preference for the company of their peers than students at Wayne.

The Faculty Questionnaire

The preliminary analysis of the staff questionnaire indicates differences in the level of satisfaction of the staffs at the two schools. Of the school adults at Thurston, 19 percent are unsatisfied with teaching as a profession and 21 percent are unsatisfied with their present job. At Wayne only 5 percent of the staff are unsatisfied with their profession and 5 percent are unsatisfied with their present jobs. The differences between the distributions on both of these items are statistically significant (satisfaction with profession $X^2 = 14.051$, $p < .01$; satisfaction with job $X^2 = 20.467$, $p < .001$). In general members of the staff at the study schools indicate that the principal, the assistant principals, the department heads, the counselors, the student body, the student government, and the individual respondents have significantly

more influence in how their school is run at Wayne than do the same groups at Thurston. On the other hand, members of the staffs at the two schools indicate that parents of students have more influence at Thurston than at Wayne. Table 4 presents the comparative analysis of staff perceptions of the amount of influence that various groups or individuals have in how the school is run. Staff members at Thurston are less pleased with how the principal, the assistant principals, the faculty, and the counselors are doing their jobs than are members of the staff at Wayne. Table 5 presents the comparative analysis of staff assessments of how well various people and groups of people are doing their jobs in the respective schools.

In sum, then, Thurston is characterized by a relatively large number of staff members who are unsatisfied with teaching as a profession, with their own jobs and with how other staff members are doing their jobs. In addition they feel that they personally as well as most other groups in the school have relatively little influence in how their school is run. Staff members at School, on the other hand, appear to be more satisfied with teaching, their own jobs, and their colleagues.

There are significant differences between the two schools in terms of interaction with other faculty members in the teachers' lounges.. Of the adults at Thurston 93 percent report interaction with other staff members in the teachers' lounges during the past week, while only 75 percent of the adults at Wayne report interactions with other staff members in the lounges. As far as can be determined, there is not a difference in the number of lounges at the two schools. This phenomena may be a

result of the common situation among teachers at Thurston who seek out other teachers to air their views and grievances and who do, in fact, spend less time than teachers at Thurston in interactions with students, for example. The teaching staff at Wayne, because of the authority structure of the school, may be composed of a larger number of cliques and small groups who do not interact widely with other teachers and who may not frequent the teachers' lounges.

Implications

The current study has indicated that the two high schools, while similar in some respects, differ in atmosphere. For the students at Wayne the school adults constitute an active part of the social context. There appears to be varied interaction with various kinds of adults across many settings in this school. In addition, student socialization encourages involvement in the life and activities of the school. There are also indications that work-related issues are involved in the socialization process. Further research in this environment could be developed to clarify the students' familial and adult relationships including styles of relating to authorities and the utilization of adults as resources. In addition the congruence between faculty and peer demands might also be focused more intensively upon the quality of interaction with adults in various settings in the school. The effect of relatively numerous contacts with adults who are perceived as personally interested in students upon work-related objectives should also be studied. For Wayne there appears to be a relatively clear action implication. The school with appropriate planning may be able to capitalize on its socio-

emotional atmosphere in order to enhance work-related activities among students. For example, students might be motivated to develop reading skills by watching some of their teachers debate about current novels on closed circuit television.

At Thurston it appears that further research might be directed toward the peer culture. As Dave Todd will report, this type of research is particularly apt at this school. In addition, the nature of classroom interaction deserves attention. This setting is the primary setting for student-adult interaction at Thurston. Future work might also investigate the sources of teacher dissatisfaction with their jobs, their profession and their colleagues. It may be that this condition serves to inhibit interaction between students and adults at Thurston. Improving the morale of the teachers may serve to enhance the social atmosphere of the school by promoting more student-teacher interaction. This in turn might serve to increase student as well as teacher involvement in the life of the school. In addition the attitude of the students might be facilitated. An intervention of this type would attempt to help the school adults gain an accurate over-view of the functioning of their school. A committee might be constituted to facilitate such an effort and to search out sources of staff dissatisfaction, low evaluation of colleagues, etc. The data from the current study, for example, might be a source of initial input for such a group. The high level of staff interaction discussed earlier may be an important factor in helping such a group to disseminate information and to stimulate discussion and new ideas about these matters.

There is a very important point which must be made in concluding this presentation. The social environments of the two schools have been shown to differ along a number of dimensions which have implications for student growth and development. These differences should be useful to the social scientist in helping to understand patterns of student adaptation at each school. In addition, as the suggested interventions imply, the method for intervening at each school and the goals of the intervention would be vastly different. In the case of Wayne, the social planner might utilize the social atmosphere which already exists to facilitate the attainment of educational goals. In the case of Thurston, the planner would be using an educational approach to help the teachers change the social atmosphere.

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APA Symposium
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TABLE 1

Important Factors in the Socialization Process

Characteristics of the Socialization Process	Variables for Study
Socializing Agents	School adults Peers
Medium for Socialization	Interaction: Quantity, Quality
Social Network	Settings
Expectations for Behavior	Norms

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TABLE 2

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEAN NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS

BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SCHOOL ADULTS AT WAYNE AND THURSTON

Kind of Adult	Mean Number of Interactions School 1*	School 2*	Standard Deviations School 1	School 2	t	Significance Level
Principal	0.17	0.15	0.638	0.453	0.462	n.s.
Assistant Principals	0.42	0.15	1.226	0.541	3.731	$p < .001$
Counselors	0.59	0.21	1.306	0.672	4.709	$p < .001$
Teachers	7.48	6.55	10.891	7.659	1.257	n.s.
Coaches	0.91	0.75	2.222	2.364	0.889	n.s.
Other School Workers	2.55	1.70	10.530	7.481	1.179	n.s.

Critical value of t for one-tailed test (df=120) are: $p < .05 = 1.645$
$p < .01 = 2.326$
$p < .001 = 3.291$

*School 1 is Wayne; School 2 is Thurston

TABLE 3

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEAN NUMBER OF SETTINGS
WHERE INTERACTION HAS BEEN REPORTED BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SCHOOL ADULTS
DURING THE PAST WEEK AT WAYNE AND THURSTON

Kind of Adult	Mean Number of Interactions School 1	Mean Number of Interactions School 2	Standard Deviations School 1	Standard Deviations School 2	t	Significance Level
1. Principal	0.51	0.42	1.200	0.835	1.089	n.s.
2. Assistant Principals	0.63	0.34	1.460	0.795	3.321	$p < .001$
3. Counselors	0.93	0.48	1.449	0.839	5.055	$p < .001$
4. Teachers	4.00	3.38	2.851	1.941	3.377	$p < .001$
Sum 1-4	6.07	4.62	5.712	3.180	4.172	$p < .001$
5. Coach	0.96	0.69	1.929	1.337	2.134	$p < .05$
6. Other School Workers	2.21	1.53	3.121	2.471	3.165	$p < .05$
Sum 1-6	6.19	5.16	3.989	3.053	3.851	$p < .001$

Critical values of t for various levels of significance for one-tailed test (df = 120)
are: $p < .05 = 1.645$
$p < .01 = 2.326$
$p < .001 = 3.291$

*School 1 is Wayne; School 2 is Thurston

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TABLE 4

Comparative Analysis at Wayne and Thurston of Staff Perceptions of Amount of Influence that Various Groups or Individuals Have in How the School Is Run

Group or Individual How much influence ...	School	Perceived Amount of Influence None at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	X^2 (4 df)	Significance Level
The School Board	W	5%	7%	29%	39%	21%	8.149	n.s.
	T	2	5	18	37	38		
Central Administration	W	2	5	22	55	16	7.858	n.s.
	T	3	5	24	37	32		
Principal	W	0	1	1	31	67	45.521	.001
	T	0	8	28	42	23		
Assistant Principals	W	2	7	30	48	12	14.830	.01
	T	0	14	52	26	9		
Department Heads	W	4	23	35	37	1	54.637	.001
	T	44	34	23	0	0		
Teachers	W	4	28	42	19	7	5.876	n.s.
	T	1	26	51	21	1		
Counselors	W	4	18	48	28	2	24.486	.001
	T	6	41	48	4	0		
Student Body	W	2	36	41	17	4	11.346	.05
	T	10	47	36	6	1		
Student Government	W	6	42	41	11	0	13.301	.01
	T	16	51	32	1	1		
Parents of Students	W	2	42	42	12	1	10.864	.05
	T	1	23	51	19	7		
Yourself	W	7	43	31	15	4	12.685	.02
	T	10	47	40	2	0		
Educational Association	W	6	16	54	21	3	5.500	n.s.
	T	2	21	64	12	1		
PTA or PTO	W	33	47	18	2	0	7.831	n.s.
	T	46	30	18	0	5		

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TABLE 5

Comparative Analysis of Staff Assessments of How Well Various People and Groups of People Are Doing Their Jobs at Wayne and Thurston

People and Groups of People	School	How happy are you with the way these people are doing their jobs in your school? (percentages) Very Happy 1	2	3	4	5	6	Very Unhappy 7	X^2 (6 df)	Significance Level
Principal	W	0	0	1	6	16	34	43	41.089	.001
Principal	T	7	9	16	9	21	28	10		
Asst. Principals	W	0	1	4	13	26	34	22	13.890	.05
Asst. Principals	T	2	6	7	17	29	33	6		
Faculty	W	0	1	3	15	31	26	15	48.322	.001
Faculty	T	5	6	19	37	23	9	1		
Counselors	W	1	6	9	21	28	26	10	24.706	.001
Counselors	T	3	13	22	35	12	15	1		
Other School Workers	W	1	0	11	14	29	29	16	11.174	n.s.
	T	1	2	10	23	25	35	4		